



# **Success factors in farm tourism**

Qualitative study of farm tourism enterprises in Finland

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<p>Agriculture in Finland and globally struggles and farmers have difficulties reaching profitability. Among other industries, tourism is found as an efficient alternative for diversification thanks to several factors. However, to forward the positive influences, tourism enterprise must succeed. This bachelor thesis is a qualitative research aiming to identify success factors in Finnish farm tourism.</p> <p>The research was conducted in spring semester 2016. It is commissioned by Lomalaidun Ry, a national association developing rural tourism in Finland. Results are addition to commissioner's knowledge and beneficial for farm tourism entrepreneurs both already in the industry and ones planning to enter it.</p> <p>Theoretical framework is created through reviewing existing researches on success factors. Based on those, hypothetical success factors in farm tourism are generated, which furthermore function as a base for interview frame. Theme interviews with four Finnish farm tourism entrepreneurs were conducted in order to collect data.</p> <p>The key findings reveal that expanded, reasonably priced and easily accessible product is a success factor. Online marketing and sales channels were found well applicable. Relevant professional and educational background of the entrepreneur are important as well as enthusiasm to the industry. Adapting in different contexts is important. Networking and taking care of one's own wellbeing is needed in the engaging profession of farm tourism entrepreneur. Pure nature, authenticity and peacefulness are unique competitive benefits of Finnish farm tourism.</p> <p>Further research and actions towards proceeding rural development would be beneficial to occur. Farm and rural tourism can for their parts contribute to more vivid and wellbeing rural areas in Finland. Additionally, countryside and nature could be more efficiently used as triumphs of differing tourism in Finland among foreign markets.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Farm tourism, success, success factors, rural development	

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# 1 Introduction

In 2013, 70 % of Finnish population lived in cities or their framing areas, which cover only 5 % of the surface area of the whole country. (TEM, 2013) Urbanisation has occurred in rather short period as in 1940 just over 20 % of Finnish population lived in the cities. (Takala & Björkstén, 2014) Such concentration tendencies arise from more industrialised and effective agriculture with less labour force required: fewer farmers feed more people. Depopulation leads to unequal distribution of services, which again challenges farm as a place-bound unit (Nilsson) and increases unemployment in rural areas. European Union's role in agriculture in its member states is significant. For instance CAP, Common Agricultural Policy, has been applied since 1960s. (MTK, 2015) EU subsidies are reduced from what they have been and that alone cuts up from farmers' already low income. Additionally, producer price index has decreased since 2013. For instance, producer prices of wheat and potato have dropped by more than a quarter in only two years. (Luonnonvarakeskus, as referenced in Olkku, 2016) Together with difficult weather conditions of previous seasons, prohibition of importing to Russia and EU's new policy of paying subsidies afterwards, Finnish agriculture has difficulties in reaching profitability. Indeed, farmer's average hourly wage is below €5.90. (MTK, 2015a)

As agriculture alone struggles, alternatives have been searched. Farmers have been encouraged to diversification for instance by LEADER programme occurring 1991-2013 by EU (ENRD, 2014) and national Rural Development Programme for mainland Finland, occurring in 2014-2020 striving for more vivid countryside, diversification of livelihoods and improvement in competitiveness and networking. (Maaseutu.fi, 2016; European Commission, 2016; Ryytänen, 2016) Out of alternative development strategies, rural and farm tourism have become a popular instrument in rural development. (Nilsson) Furthermore, Phelan & Sharpley (2011) find that "tourism as an "alternative farm enterprise" has become a key development strategy for rural regions as well as an individual strategy for the farm household". Also in Finland, rural tourism is recognised as a growing industry generating needed employment and income from both domestic and international markets. (Maaseutu.fi, 2016a) Tourism is a favourable choice thanks to its tendency to benefit indirect businesses, such as retail and building industry, around it (Jänkälä, 2014) which then contributes more holistically to the whole region and community. Additionally, as well as a farm, also tourism is place-bound (Nilsson) – operation cannot be relocated to other, for instance more convenient environment, but it will stay in the countryside. Even though farm tourism covers only small proportion of total income of tourism, or even rural tourism industry, it has significance on national and local level. (Nilsson) Positive reflective effects of tourism to other industries are visible to rather

large extent once tourism business succeed. (Jänkälä, 2014) Said that, it is convenient to proceed towards the topic of this thesis paper.

Indeed, it is essential for rural development that new businesses are not only founded but that they also succeed – successful enterprises are the main success factor of the countryside. (Hautamäki, 2000, 11) Not to underrate other alternative industries' contribution to rural development, this thesis focuses merely on tourism due to its positive features introduced earlier. Focus is further deepened into farm tourism and its success factors. To knowledge of author and commissioner, the topic is unexamined in this context. Barbieri & Mshenga (2008, as referenced in Phelan & Sharpley, 2011, 122) confirm the assumption; lack of knowledge about “the characteristics of either farm or farmer that might positively impact on agritourism performance” is evident. Identifying those characteristics, or success factors, in farm tourism in Finland is the aim of this thesis.

Limitation to tourism is considered justifiable thanks to benefits it offers to local community. Further limitation to farm tourism again is needed due to wide range of rural tourism enterprises and products. Besides, defining the concepts is more straightforward once they can be viewed from national viewpoint instead of global. That again should benefit both author and reader of this thesis, as well as increase reliability of the research.

Research problem is transformed into a simple research question: What are the main success factors in farm tourism enterprises in Finland? Answering this question will provide an image of a successful farm tourism enterprise. It is approached by qualitative research. Theme interviews with successful Finnish farm tourism entrepreneurs are conducted in order to generate data. Results are to be addition to commissioning party's knowledge. They should be beneficial for entrepreneurs already in the industry as well as to the ones planning to enter it. Thesis is to be read by anyone interested in farm tourism or rural development. Results fulfil already existing research on rural development and decreases the mentioned lack of knowledge on topic. Additionally, author hopes further researches are inspired.

This thesis is commissioned by Lomalaidun ry, a national association developing rural tourism in Finland. Their main missions are to develop rural tourism as a livelihood, improve the conditions of rural businesses and entrepreneurs as well as function as an expert in the field. (Lomalaidun ry, 2015) Lomalaidun ry administrates Matkamaalle.fi that is the largest media and sales channel for rural holidays in Finland. (Matkamaalle.fi, 2016; MTK, 2016)

First, farm tourism is defined based on existing literature. Its varying nature is recognised and before focusing on farm tourism barely in Finland, some global examples are introduced. Additionally, challenges faced by farm tourism nowadays are reviewed. Following chapter continues on farm tourism enterprises with further defining *successful* farm tourism enterprise for the purposes of this research. Each interviewee is briefly introduced. In chapter four framework on success factors is built. Kamensky's diamond of success is used as a base to which reviewed research findings are included. As a result in the end of the chapter modified *diamond of success* in farm tourism is acquainted. This figure functions as a framework based on which the interview questions are generated. Next, research implementation is gone through with introductions and justifications of research method, data collection and data analysis. Additionally, reliability and validity of the research are evaluated. Chapter six introduces the findings following the structure of interviews. In following chapter findings are again reviewed with further interpretation and relevant development suggestions. Last, evaluation of the trustworthiness of the research and the thesis process itself takes place.

## 2 Farm tourism

At its simplest, farm tourism is tourism that occurs in a farm setting. (Peebles, 1995 as referenced in Phelan & Sharpley, 2011 and Busby & Rendle, 2000) It is often related to rural tourism and the two labels are sometimes, falsely, interchangeably used with each other (Phillip, S., Hunter, C. & Blackstock, K. 2009). Relation indeed is strong but actually farm tourism is not equivalent to, but rather sub-set of rural tourism. (Nilsson) Rural tourism is any form of tourism occurring in the countryside (Dashper, 2015, 4) and covers therefore not only farm tourism, but also for instance wine and gastronomy tourism and camping (Novelli, 2009, 9). Several articles and studies find farm tourism equalling to agritourism while few find a slight difference between the two: farm tourism occurs in farm setting, agritourism in any agricultural setting that includes not only farm but also for instance farmers' markets. (Dionysopoulou, Katsoni, & Argyropoulou, 2015) "Farm tourism" is therefore applied throughout this paper.

Farm tourism can be difficult to define due to the range of activities comprised and the lack of data source available. (Busby & Rendle, 2000) Differences in "the role agriculture and rural areas play in a country or region" lead to definitions varying depending on the location in question (Sznajder, Przezbórszka & Scrimgeour, 2009, 5). Furthermore, definitions of 'farm' and 'rural' can vary significantly between, and even within, different countries (Dashper, 2015, 4).

Several definitions suggest that farm tourism should occur on a working farm and involve tourists in the farm life and tasks (Clarke, 1999; Gladstone & Morris, 2000; Iakovidou, 1997; Ollenburger & Buckley, 2007; Ollenburger, 2006; Oppermann, 1996; as referenced in Phillip, Hunter & Blackstock, 2010). However, some definitions recognise the changing character of tourist involvement. For instance, Roberts & Hall (2001, as referenced in Phillip, Hunter & Blackstock, 2010) find that farm tourism is "increasingly used to describe a range of activities... [which] may have little in common with the farm other than the farmer managing the land on which they take place". Activities traditionally based on farm, such as horse riding, indeed are not agricultural (Phillip, Hunter & Blackstock, 2010) but perhaps recreational instead. Busby & Rendle (2000) recognise transition from "tourism on farm" to "farm tourism". Tourism on farm is supplementary commercial activity along agriculture whereas farm tourism is more tourism-focused and demand-led. Several factors, "such as the level of marketing, competition, entrepreneurship and investment, will dictate where each farm lies on this continuum". Experience is more authentic to a visitor closer to "tourism on farm" –end an enterprise lies. In some publications, it is criticised that



farming is practised in a very small scale just in order to be called as farm tourism enterprise. Such operation is strongly farm tourism.

Phillip, Hunter & Blackstock (2010) introduce agritourism typology, presented in figure 1, in order to create more consistent, shared understanding of the term. Three discriminators of farm tourism definitions most frequently mentioned in literature are considered. Those discriminators are whether farm tourism bases on a working farm; the nature of tourist contact with agriculture; and whether the tourist experience is authentic. Based on them, agritourism is divided into five discrete types from “non-working farm agritourism” to “working farm, direct contact, authentic agritourism”. Similarly, to Busby & Rendle’s (2000) continuum this typology proceeds from least to most authentic.

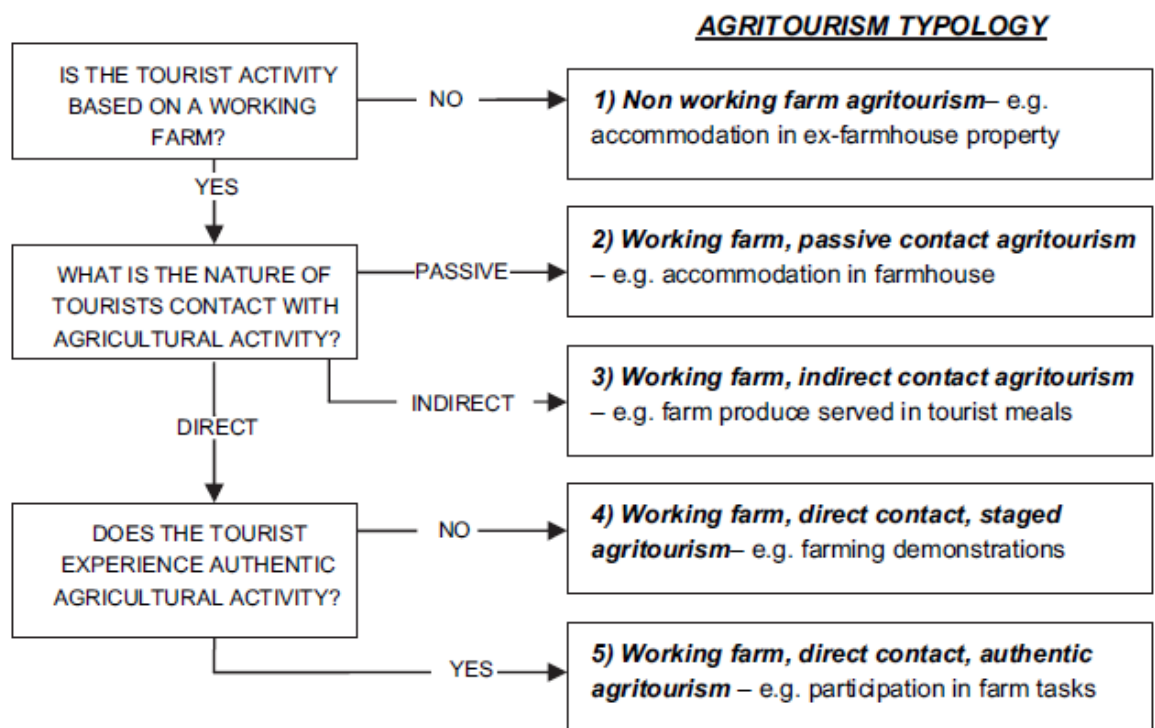


Figure 1 (Phillip, Hunter & Blackstock, 2010)

As a form of tourism, farm tourism should fulfil a certain criteria. First, visitors should be travelling for purposes qualified as tourism, such as leisure and holiday, business or visiting friends and families. Travel purposes not qualified as tourism are for instance migration and commuting to work. (Weaver, 2009, 8) Tourist is someone who travels to a destination outside his or her daily environment. According to UNWTO’s definition tourist stays in a destination at minimum 24 hours and at maximum a year. However, day visitors, ones whose stay does not include overnight, are mainly considered as tourists as well if they fulfil criteria otherwise. (Jänkälä, 2014)

## 2.1 Overview to farm tourism abroad

As acknowledged previously farm tourism can be defined in several ways. Some global concepts and examples of farm tourism are briefly introduced in order to understand the varying nature of farm tourism. Afterwards focus is deepened barely into Finnish farm tourism.

When handling European farm tourism, France and Italy are raised as examples in several articles. Both countries are idyllic farm tourism destinations with wine yards and cheese production, tourists accommodated in historic farmhouses built of stone. In many destinations, visitors can have an authentic experience taking part in production processes. Both France and Italy are marketed with authenticity of local food and wine, nature, history and culture, and traditions of different regions. Additionally, possibilities for activities are several including for instance sports like skiing in the French Alps. Hosts are genuinely taking care of visitors. (Eurogites, 2016, 2016a; Gites de France, 2016)

In United States, agritourism is considered as a growing industry with a lot of potential. It is encouraged and supported by state. Exploring Agritourism World, website listing agritourism enterprises in United States, reveals that destinations and activities vary. However, focus seems to be quite a lot on educative factors. Different farmers' markets and farms where guests can pick up their own products, for instance pumpkins or apples, seem to be popular. Authentic experience and contact with farm tasks are then provided for guests. (Yee, 2013; Agritourism World, 2016)

In developing countries, farm tourism can be a feasible alternative to economic growth. At its best, it increases wellbeing of local communities. For instance in Kenya coffee and tea tours and bee keeping farms are some of the main attractions in the Western part of the country. Positive impacts of tourism includes for example improving infrastructure and increasing amount of services, which again employ preferably local people. (TourismMaster, 2010)

## 2.2 Farm tourism in Finland

Since this thesis focuses on farm tourism merely in Finland, defining it is to some extent more straightforward than it would be in global scale. *Maatilamatkailu* is Finnish translation of farm tourism. Additionally, there are terms *maaseutumatkailu*, rural tourism, and *kylämatkailu*, village tourism. The latter means common effort taken by village and its tourism enterprises and organisations towards tourism development. (Lomalaidun, 2016) Countryside in Finland can be considered as any area outside the cities. (Aho &

Rahkonen, 2014) Anyhow, definitions for different purposes are many and they can base for instance on municipalities, post number areas, population tendency or numbers. (Statistics Finland, 2003) Further, countryside is divided to three types, which are countryside close to the cities; core countryside and sparsely accommodated countryside. (Aho & Rahkonen, 2014) The latter is most threatened by depopulation and unemployment. (Kaunisharju, 2009) Defining countryside any more precisely may be irrelevant since focus of this thesis is on farms. Statistics Finland (2016) defines "farm as an "active holding" with agricultural production and at least one hectare of arable land in use." Therefore, author does not consider "non-working farms", as presented in figure 1 (see chapter 2), as farm tourism enterprises. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis a Finnish farm tourism enterprise is defined as a tourism enterprise, which occurs on a working farm. Nature of guest contact or authenticity of agricultural experience are not considered as defining factors, instead they are potential success factors.

Farm holidays are strongly associated with nature. Main proportion of activities offered take place outdoors. Rural tourism is often marketed as counter balance to busy everyday life and quietness and peace indeed are triumphs that enhance its competitiveness. Countryside is also traditional environment for celebration and event gatherings. Mainly local food made of pure ingredients is offered in farm tourism destinations. (Matkamaalle.fi, 2016c)

### **2.2.1 Finnish farm tourism enterprises**

Rural tourism enterprises, including farm tourism, occur in rural areas and are family enterprises mainly practised as secondary entrepreneurship. On the other hand, some entrepreneurs have moved from agriculture to work fulltime in tourism industry. Rural tourism is often associated with sustainability thanks to its focus and benefit on local environment, community and services. Farm tourism is mainly operated in such low volume that external personnel is not employed. Main proportion of farm tourism enterprises generate less than €10 000 in annual revenue. (Ryymän, 2008, 8, 14) In 2013, there were 16 800 diversified farms in Finland, which is around third of the total amount of farms. Almost three quarters of these operate in the service industry. "Tourism, accommodation and recreation" services are offered by 1180 farms. Furthermore, almost all offer accommodation services: roundly 900 rent holiday cabins whereas 135 farms offer other "accommodation services". Since 2000 amount of farms diversified to service industry has dropped by more than a thousand units. (Tike, 2014) This can perhaps be explained by the fact that number of farms in general has decreased.

Being a family enterprise brings its own characteristics. Family and enterprise interact with each other continuously – changes in family influence enterprise and vice versa. This enables family enterprise a competitive advantage and uniqueness that cannot be copied – family may become brand of which enterprise is known for. Entrepreneur gives his or her face for the whole enterprise. In addition to uniqueness, personal responsibility grows. This, together with the fact that investing and risks are pulled from one's own money, on the other hand often leads to more considered decisions. Continuity and persistency are valued in family enterprises, because aim is to pass the business to following generation. (Elo-Pärssinen & Talvitie, 2010) Traditionally, also farms are passed from generation to generation. Incentive to manage business successfully can be encouraged by will not only to pass it further, but also to continue the work previous generations have done.

### **2.2.2 Finnish farm tourism products**

Farm tourism products are mainly intangible as is typical of travel and tourism industry. Farming environment itself is part of the product (Busby & Rendle, 2000). Ryymin (2008) has divided rural tourism amenities to five “main product entities” out of which “farm vacations” is one. It again includes not only accommodation and alimentation that together often form main income, but also different activities and other services linked to tourism. Activities and services indeed are the factors that attract tourists to a certain destination and separate it from its competitors. Davies & Gilbert (1992, as referenced in Busby & Rendle, 2000) segments farm tourism products into three categories: accommodation-based, activity-based and day-visitor-based products. Informants of this thesis all offer accommodation services (see chapter 3.1.).

Malmgård in southern Finland, located in the city of Loviisa, is an example of a day-visitor based farm tourism enterprise. In their 500 hectares of arable land, organic farming is conducted. Additionally Malmgård welcomes tourists, both individual and groups. They can get to know the mansion house and farm during a pre-booked guided tour. Microbrewery and farm café, as well as farm shop where various products of Malmgård farm are sold, function in the properties. (Malmgård, 2016) Activity-based products can be for example picking up berries and vegetables or horseback riding and other sports, just to name a few. As mentioned, range of tourism enterprises is wide and several of them offer various products for different customers.

Exploring the website [Matkamaalle.fi](http://Matkamaalle.fi) reveals that all the destinations listed (15) offer accommodation and meal services ([Matkamaalle.fi](http://Matkamaalle.fi), 2016a). Accommodation can take place for instance in farm main buildings, barns or cottages, or in tents and campervans. Food is served in all the destinations. Especially breakfast serving is mentioned severally

but dining is often arranged as well. Additionally, meeting and celebration venues and caterings are rather common. Range of activities offered is large. Matkamaalle.fi has divided them into six categories as follows.

1. Indulgence and well-being, for instance massage, yoga and shopping.
2. Nature and exercise, for instance beaches, nature parks, berry picking and skiing.
3. For children, for instance domestic animal farms and horseback riding.
4. Culture, for instance summer theatres, museums and art exhibitions.
5. Ball games, for instance golf, football and tennis.
6. Adventure, for instance snowmobile riding and paintball. (Matkamaalle.fi, 2016b)

Roughly, tangible products are limited to vendible farm products, such as jams, juices and handicrafts sold in farm stores that some destinations run on their properties.

### **2.3 Challenges of farm tourism**

Rural and therefore farm tourism are criticised for being unprofessionally operated. Practically anyone can start a business and then consider themselves as farm tourism entrepreneurs. Such “amateurish” operation anyhow affects the quality of products sold to customers. Tourism industry is often considered as convenient alternative since hospitality is a “basic virtue” anyone can offer. Gillings (1995, as referenced in Busby & Rendle, 2000, 638) even aggravates by reporting “farmers think that because they know how to look after animals, they know how to look after people”. It is not always understood that diversifying to actually profitable, professional tourism enterprise requires much more, also skills not related to agriculture. Bad products easily lead to bad reputation of the whole industry (Matkailun teemaryhmä) especially now when customers can share their experiences and opinions online without any control. (Rowett, 2014)

Additionally, lack of professionalism leads to low occupancy rates. Average occupancy rate is below 30 % in most of a year, but during July and August it climbs up to nearly 70 %. Demand varies a lot and rural tourism indeed is strongly seasonal. Summer is the high season but there is a slight peek also during Christmas season. Around 65 % of businesses operate year-round. (Matkailun teemaryhmä; Ryymin, 2008) Additionally, farming itself is mainly a seasonal job and often centres closely to same season as tourism. A lot of farmer-tourism entrepreneur’s income depends therefore on this rather short season. It can also be considered challenging to balance agriculture and tourism in suitable scale. Proceeding from “tourism on farm” towards “farm tourism” agricultural activities withdraw. However, guest may expect visit to be “incarnation of the fulfilling of the romantic dream of staying in the countryside”. (Nilsson) Especially nature and old-fashioned farming methods are romanticised to extent perhaps no longer visible in

nowadays' mechanized world. Nilsson (1998, as referenced in Busby & Rendle, 2000, 640) further comments, "the old idealised picture of the farmer has not totally disappeared". It is therefore questionable whether inauthentic experiences satisfy customer expectations. Meanwhile running both efficient farm business and efficient tourism business can require too much time and effort.

Infrastructure worsens as depopulation occurs. Basic services such as shops, banks and public transport have already steeply decreased and still do in the countryside. (Matkailun teemaryhmä) First step for a tourist to visit a destination is to access it. Without sufficient infrastructure that alone may be difficult. Additionally, the lacking supply of services in rural areas lead to economic leakage - tourism enterprise may have to cooperate with urban providers. Aging rural population again leads to challenges to recruit future entrepreneurs in the field. (NordRegio, 2013, 22)

Rigid regulations and high costs challenge entrepreneurship in Finland and other Nordic countries. For instance hiring an employee can be difficult. High costs also make tourism expensive for tourists, both domestic and international. (NordRegio, 2013, 21-22)

Everyday life is closely connected with work, since one often lives in the same country yard as the tourists. Entrepreneur is very engaged into the job since welcoming guests mainly requests physical presence in the destination.

### **3 Successful farm tourism enterprise**

Even though success is often associated with economic wealth (Juuti, 2012, 11) for the purposes of this thesis it is not considered as a means of measurement. It would be challenging, even impossible, because income from farm tourism operation is rarely separated from agricultural income and therefore numbers are not even available. (Ryymin, 2008) Mäkinen (2008, as referenced in MTK, 2008) asks for more large understanding of success. For instance, it is important that entrepreneur him/herself can set goals and take actions to reach them. However, business must reach at least financial sustainability in order to continue its operation. (Weaver, 2008, 17; Viitala & Jylhä, 2001, 125) Additionally, successful enterprise is sometimes equalled to growing one but it is also noticed that not all, especially small businesses, aim to growth. (Viitala & Jylhä, 2001, 246-248) Latter indeed is true when it comes to farm tourism enterprises. Since they are mainly practised as secondary entrepreneurship, farmer's capacity to invest time or money on tourism enterprise is somewhat restricted.

In order to choose interviewees for the purposes of this thesis following steps were taken. First, commissioning party provided author with a list of farm tourism enterprises they find successful. Approach is considered reasonable thanks to commissioning party's expertise and holistic experience in the field. Besides, given the lack of statistics and other information available about farm tourism enterprises, feasible alternatives were rather limited. Second, author researched webpages of farm tourism destinations concerned – precondition therefore was that enterprises at all have webpages. Internet as the most convenient information source played a significant role in scoping the potential interviewees. Besides having a webpage, researcher paid attention on content – information should be updated and overview somewhat professional. In addition, all these enterprises use at least one social media platform, of which Facebook is most common. The fact that all the interviewees represent an accommodation-based farm tourism enterprise is more of a coincidence. Anyhow, it is justifiable due to the range of activities offered – in this way the sample is more cohesive and therefore data generated more reliable.

#### **3.1 Interviewees**

All the enterprises included are briefly introduced. Each falls into farm tourism definition as introduced earlier. All these farms practise agriculture in one form and size or another on the side of tourism. Additionally, all the included enterprises offer accommodation as one of their product. Following introductions are assembled from enterprises' webpages prior to interviews.

### **3.1.1 Hyvölän talo**

Hyvölän talo lies in Ähtäri. It is a working farm with both agriculture and forestry practised. Agricultural history under the same family dates back to 17<sup>th</sup> century, while tourism has been operated since 1990. Hyvölän talo accommodates guests year round in three cottages. In summer season, bed and breakfast is available. Then accommodation takes place in the main farmhouse, granary building in the country yard and a cottage by lake. Outside the summer season, bed and breakfast can be separately ordered for groups. However, breakfast is served and additional meal and café services are provided upon orders year round. In Hyvölän talo events and meetings can be organised. Training day packages include meeting facility with equipment, lunch and two café servings. Different recreational activities, such as fishing, swimming and rowing, are available. For school or other groups there is possibility for guided tours exploring agriculture, forestry or fishing. There are two different saunas in the estate. They combined with hot tub and “Laplander’s hut” provide frame for entertaining social evening for groups up to 50 persons. (Hyvölän talo, 2016)

### **3.1.2 Ilola farm and B&B**

Ilola farm and B&B is located in Valkeakoski, in the village of Metsäkansa. Organic farming is practised and harvest produced is used for feeding livestock raised. There is also a horse stable and riding activities are engaged with tourism operations. Additionally, there are sheep, ducks, hen, cats and dogs on the farm. Tourism has been practised at Ilola farm since 1983.

Guests are accommodated in several buildings. Various expectations are fulfilled as alternatives extend from humble granary rooms to a private cottage with sauna by lake. Many of the rooms and buildings can be transformed according to what is needed. In addition to accommodation, conferences and events can be organised. Conference packages for one or several days are sold. They are tailor-made including for instance meal and café services and activities, such as sauna bathing, outdoors sports or even gold panning, as wished. As the name reveals, Ilola farm and B&B offers breakfast to overnight visitors. Café and meal services are open daily and additional meal services for conferences and events can be ordered. There are two other restaurants, which are open upon request. Meals and cafeteria products are homemade and local ingredients are favoured. For instance, Angus-meat is produced at the farm. Additionally, catering service is available. Souvenirs and handicrafts are sold in the farm shop, which is open daily. (Ilola farm and B&B, 2015)



### **3.1.3 Lomakivi**

Lomakivi is located in Kausala in the village of Radansuu. It is a grain farm that has operated in tourism industry since 2005. Lomakivi was awarded as “developing rural tourism enterprise of the year” in 2015 by Lomalaidun Ry and Finnish Association of Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs. (Puhakka, 2015)

Guests are welcomed to stay overnight in furnished apartments in authentic courtyard environment. Even though farm itself has a long, vivid history, the apartments are quite recently built with particular purpose to accommodate tourists. However, they are built in a traditional way. Each apartment is provided with three to four bedrooms, kitchen, sauna and laundry room. Overnight stays include breakfast served in the main farm building, which dates back to 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally hot tub can be rented.

Meetings and events can be arranged in the destination. Separate meeting packages are sold and one can choose from half-day, day or over-night package. They include conference room, needed meal services and meeting equipment. Additionally, over-night meeting package includes accommodation and sauna. The main farmhouse is rented for gatherings up to 60 people. Meal services focus on authentic, local ingredients. Radansuu village is vivid with local residents, services, and activities, such as village shop, horse stable and golf course. Village centre is located only two kilometres away. Nearby there is a beach suitable for swimming, sunbathing or volleyball. Beach is family friendly and provides for instance children’s playground. (Lomakivi, 2016)

### **3.1.4 Mäkelän lomatuvat**

Mäkelän lomatuvat are located in Korkeakoski. Bed & breakfast accommodation is organised in two buildings in the country yard. Additionally, by a lake nearby there are nine cottages of different size rentable for guests. All of them provide basic facilities above which sauna, terrace and own boat to be used are included. In the estates, there is a separate sauna building to be rented for groups. Hot tub can additionally be rented and relocated outside either sauna or any cottage. Additional wellbeing services or product presentations can be arranged in co-operation with local businesses. Meal services are organised for groups upon orders. Meeting facilities are suitable for groups of 10-25 persons. Meeting package includes a room with equipment, two café servings and lunch. It can be tailor-made according to customer requests. Rentable sports gear include bikes, skis and snowshoes. Snowmobile with riding equipment is also available. Special programme of Mäkelän lomatuvat is a guided forest tour, where guests get to know about

management of forests, forest development and diverse affordances it offers. (Mäkelän lomatuvat, 2016)

## 4 Framework on success factors

When it comes to success, luck and coincidence always play a part. (Juuti, 2012, 14) Entrepreneurs have common trust that success depends on oneself and one must be prepared to make decisions based on that. Success cannot be copied from one enterprise to another; instead, each success story is a unique story of its own. (Hautamäki, 2000, 74, 129) However, success factors have been researched and even though they indeed are not forecasting, they can be considered at least directing.

Success factor is an element that positively affects business towards reaching success. It is to be noticed that one success factor alone does not automatically lead to success, but instead several must be applied “in the right combinations to yield successful results”. (Lawrimore, 2011, 6) Critical or key success factors again are elements absolutely required in order to business to success. (Clow & Stevens, 2009) Unique selling points, or propositions, are factors that make one product or service different and better from what competitors offer. (Entrepreneur, 2016)

In order to create themes for interviews, researcher must have vision of the phenomenon in question. (Kananen, 2014, 77) Therefore, existing researches and articles on success factors are reviewed. Due to fewness of them focused precisely farm tourism establishments, following ones regard to more generally applicable approach to success factors. Still, farm and rural tourism –related ones are highlighted to extent possible. After all, farm tourism, apart from its industry-associated characteristics, shares same success factors as other tourism businesses (Ryymin, 2008) and has strong linkage with rural tourism. In addition, to minimise risk for cultural interpretation differences, Finnish literature is slightly emphasized. Interview questions (see appendix 1) are generated relating to theory.

Introduced success factor model, a diamond of success by Kamensky (2015) is said to be applicable on various levels from individuals to big corporations. It can anyhow be considered questionable whether same ones are significant for small enterprises like the ones in farm tourism industry. Therefore, model is presented in order to provide a holistic framework on success factors, which then can be deepened towards farm tourism. In chapter 4.3 modified version of the diamond of success is presented. In that version findings from introduced researches and article review are included and hypothetical success factors in farm tourism are thus generated.

#### 4.1 The diamond of success – success factor model

“The diamond of success” by Kamensky (2015) is considered suitable for this thesis because of its recent publication, Finnish author and universally applicable approach. Four main success factors, or edges of a diamond, are claimed to be valid on all levels from societies to individuals. These factors are strategy, management or leadership, knowhow and interaction, which all are observed as equal success factors. The main matters of each “edge” are plainly presented in figure 2.

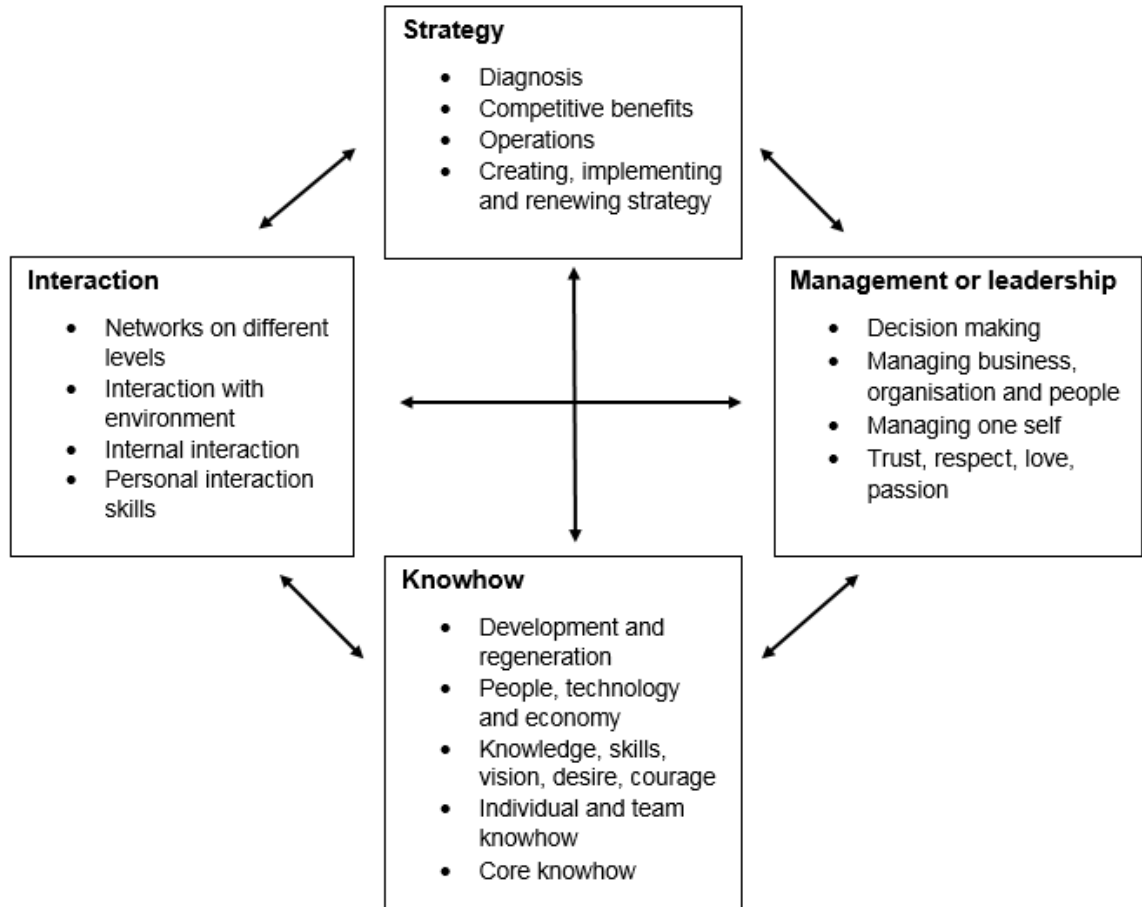


Figure 2 (translated from original figure in Kamensky, 2015, 358; see appendix 3)

It is to be notified that all the four success factors interact with each other and depending on viewpoint, context and situation any of them can be considered as a paramount. Still, all of them are needed in order to success – for instance, management is futile if it does not lead to good strategy, knowhow and interaction. Therefore, Kamensky’s model can be applied to different fields and function as a solid base for further deepening to a specific industry. The holistic image of success is understood and evident in this model. That enables researching the topic quite freely without limiting it to be too narrow and directing.

## **4.2 Success factor researches**

Previously presented success factor models both recognise that any success factor can be the most important one. Following researches again seem to identify success factors precisely in order of importance. That supports the assumption that general success factors in business are the same regardless of industry, but the ones significant for a business to succeed in a specific field vary. Studies are presented one by one proceeding from rural enterprises in general towards farm tourism focused approach. Additional chapter of article review on success factors generally in tourism and hospitality is introduced. Based on the findings Kamensky's "diamond of success" is reviewed again with focus more precisely on farm tourism enterprises and their success factors.

### **4.2.1 Success factors in rural enterprises**

Hautamäki's (2000) research on successful enterprises operating in Finnish countryside includes businesses from different industries. Tourism enterprises are excluded because there were no businesses successful enough in the industry. Still, common factor is the rural business environment. Enterprise is successful when its growth is fast and profitable and it employs "significantly". Hautamäki emphasizes "interesting" businesses that have a new, unique business idea or operation in industry usually rare in rural environment.

Data has been collected in two different strategies; primary data in a form of questionnaire answered by entrepreneurs themselves and secondary data for instance from articles, business registries and enterprises' homepages.

Results from semi-structured questionnaire reveal that stable and competent personnel is by far the most popular success factor. Second, good product, reputation and quality better than competitors' are essential. Third, customer relations, especially long-lasting ones, are important. Sufficient leadership including ability to adapt, flexible and simple organisational structure and systematical operation was found the fourth most important success factor.

Conclusions from secondary data are somewhat different. The most important success factors were found to be "strong entrepreneur-leader personality" and excellent product along with related knowledge or expertise. Hautamäki believes results vary from ones generated through questionnaires due to Finnish habit of not praising neither oneself nor one's own product.

#### **4.2.2 Industry report on crucial success factors in rural tourism**

Industry reports are industry specific bulletins where information is collected and combined from different resources. Peace and looseness are success factors in rural tourism. Importance of information technology and exploitation of possibilities it offers, grows further. By specialising and networking, while taking care of high quality products, rural tourism business generates a sufficient base and possibilities for its own success. Characteristically to family enterprise, rural tourism businesses are individualised which alone can be considered as a success factor against large chain corporations and globalisation. Procedure is often flexible which enables sales of customised products depending on demand. In the future, co-operation with industry's larger businesses and environmental responsibility will become central success factors. (Ryymin, 2008)

#### **4.2.3 Success factors in rural tourism in Norway**

Kollerud & Melleby (2007) have researched success factors in Norwegian rural tourism in their master's thesis *Success factors in rural tourism – A case study of three successful tourism establishments in rural areas in Hordaland*. Establishment is considered successful once it fulfil two requirements: establishment has a set goal and has reached it; and establishment's drifts margin is at least 8 %. Success factors are divided in three shares, as is found suitable according to previous studies; qualities of establisher; network; and strategy.

Results show that personal qualities of establisher are important. He or she should be motivated, dedicated to what he or she is working with and have good leadership skills. Relevant formal competency, in this case including for instance work or education experience in tourism industry, was found not to be that important once establisher has relevant informal competency that compensates the lack. Relevant informal competency is something one can apply to tourism operations. According to the study, large and well-developed social network is an important success factor. When it comes to strategy, expanded product, meaning that business offers all accommodation, serving and activities, is a strength. Furthermore, combined with local resources and history, product becomes more trustworthy and demanded. Quality of products is important, as well as price strategy. Price strategy assigns how customer finds a product – high price is associated with high quality. Meanwhile, perhaps surprisingly, updated business plan and profitability target were both found rather meaningless.

#### **4.2.4 Entrepreneurial success factors in farm tourism – exploring agritourism in England**

Phelan & Sharpley (2011) have conducted a quantitative research in North-West England asking farmers themselves what they considered relevant skills in order to reach effective and successful diversification to agritourism. Focus is merely on entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurs interviewed represent wide range of farm tourism providers offering products from on-farm accommodation to on-farm recreation such as horse riding. Criteria for “successful enterprise” is not presented. Skills are divided into two categories: managerial skills; and entrepreneurial and personal maturity skills. Customer service meaning “handling service expectations and dealing with problems” was found to be the most important managerial skill. Additionally, “managing finances”, “marketing and sales” and “organisation skills” were considered important. Conversely knowledge of “small business regulations” was found less important and supervision and management of employees least significant. The last is explained by the fact that farm tourism entrepreneur seldom has to manage external employees since question is mainly about family businesses.

Entrepreneurial and personal maturity skills were all considered rather equally important in the following order: accountability, emotional coping, critical evaluation, networking, self-awareness, environmental scanning, business concept, goal setting and negotiation skills. As Kollerud & Melleby, also Phelan & Sharpley found that only a small proportion, less than 30%, of the interviewed farm tourism entrepreneurs had a written business plan. Even fewer had formal marketing plan.

#### **4.2.5 Success factors in hospitality industry**

Caan (2014) emphasizes that “customers are at the heart of the hospitality industry.” Target group of a business must be willing to pay for the product or service offered. Consequently, quality must be worth the money. In order that customers return, they must like a product. All kind of feedback from consumers, for instance posted in TripAdvisor, is essential information for a business. High quality service can make a significant difference in customer satisfaction and lead to returning customers. Business should be flexibly run and development should take place whether required. In certain situations, outsourcing may be an idea worth consideration. Additionally, Caan recommends one knows an industry before entering it, as well as does Zwilling (2014) by guiding one to start with a service one knows and loves. The role of entrepreneur in business success, which totally depends on his or her skills, resources and abilities to attract customers, is emphasized. Entrepreneur should have sufficient communication skills, including skill to let people

know about business. Visibility and availability in different channels, for instance social media and events, is important. Colleague networks are beneficial as well as staying updated of current technological and social changes in the industry. Employees should have good skills to provide innovative service of high value to customers. High quality customer service indeed is essential and each interaction with customer should be positive, leading to reference and repeated business.

Traditionally, the most important success factor of hotel industry has been location. Hotels placed where there are people and demand usually do well. Price is another competitive factor that may differ one hotel from others. Quality experience must be offered since consumers have so many options to choose from. It is beneficial to follow the industry and trends occurring also globally. Importance of customer service is emphasized and it is notified that only a short negative interaction may lead to bad review online. Employees should be satisfied so that they provide excellent customer service. Finally, flexibility is important because customer expectations vary significantly. At least trying to respond to those needs can make a big difference in customer satisfaction which again more likely leads to good reviews and word of mouth –marketing. (Thompson)

#### **4.3 Hypothetical success factors in farm tourism in Finland**

Reviewed these studies, there is no doubt entrepreneur he/herself is an important factor affecting success of a farm tourism enterprise. After all, he or she is present in every phase of business operations. Additionally, qualities of entrepreneur, even though not considered as an edge of their own, are evident in each edge of the diamond of success – he or she is the one implementing the strategy; he or she is the manager or leader; his or her knowhow is applied to the business; and networks on different levels are his or her responsibility. Hautamäki (2000) even finds a strong entrepreneur-leader personality as the most important success factor in rural enterprises. A modified diamond of success in figure 3 below gathers success factors assumingly relevant to farm tourism.



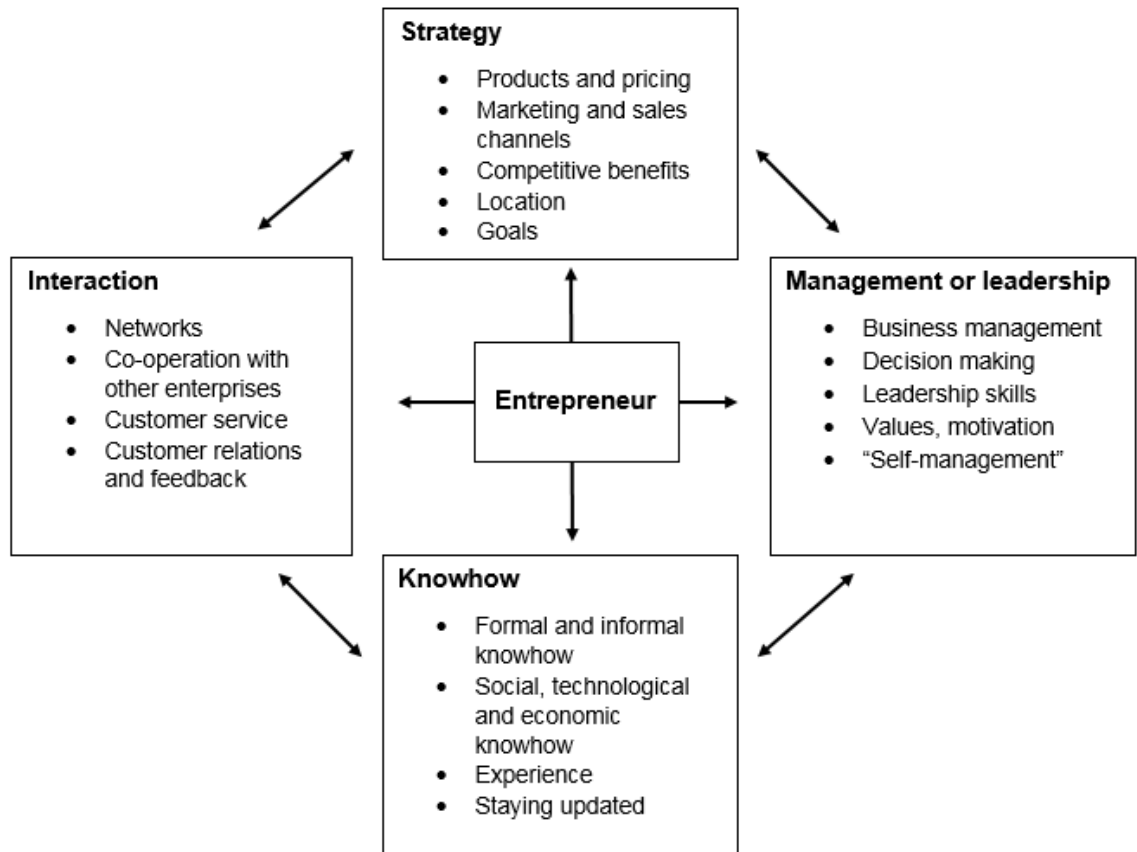


Figure 3, modified diamond of success in farm tourism

Strategy is recognised as a success factor by main proportion of studies presented. It includes for instance product, which should be priced accordingly and preferably rather expanded as identified in Kollerud & Melleby (2011, see chapter 4.2.3.) Additionally, product should be of high quality or at least better than competitors' products. Product should also have some unique selling points in order to differ from competition and be therefore demanded. Same, stable high quality should all the time be ensured. Marketing and sales channels are important since they define whether and how potential customers find a product. Strategy diagnosis and "creating, implementing and renewing strategy" are excluded based on the findings by Kollerud & Melleby (2007) and Phelan & Sharpley (2011) of farm tourism entrepreneurs not having formal written plans of their operations. Anyhow, some level of renewing is considered important since tourism industry especially is significantly affected by several factors. One must therefore be prepared to adapt accordingly. (Widjaya, 2015) Farm tourism enterprise's location barely is a strategic decision but still, it is a potential success factor. Last, having goals can be a success factor as they motivate and affect the decisions made in managing everyday operations of the enterprise.

Effective management of business and organisation is obviously a success factor. Managing people is excluded because there mainly are none external employees to manage. However, one must be able to self-management, including taking care of one's own wellbeing - wellbeing person provides better customer service. Kamensky (2014) includes trust, respect, love and passion to management (see figure 1). Additionally, Kollerud & Melleby (2007) find dedication and motivation to one's work as a success factor. Values direct entrepreneur's actions taken to some extent and therefore they can make a difference in business success. Establisher should also have "good leadership skills", to which Hautamäki (2000) includes ability to adapt. Decision-making is an important part of business management and therefore how it is conducted is significant. Small family enterprises are thanked for making considered decisions without taking too much risk, which can be a success factor. Management must also respond to challenges faced, in the case of farm tourism for instance seasonal changes in demand should be reacted to.

Kollerud & Melleby (2007) suggest that relevant formal competency is not important in order for business to succeed as far as the lack is replaced with other competencies. Hautamäki (2000) found product-related knowledge or expertise as one of the main success factors. However, it is obvious that experience, and most importantly learning from it, enhances entrepreneur's potential to success. Technological, economic and social knowhow are all needed in running a tourism business. As it is service industry in question, social knowhow may be the most important factor. Ryymin (2008) again recognises the importance of information technology in rural tourism. It is therefore important for entrepreneur to be utilize it. It is important to stay updated in the field one is in because development is so fast. Following trends occurring also on global level may give entrepreneur "head start" against competitors. External help or outsourcing may be beneficial whether entrepreneur oneself has a lack of knowhow in some area.

Interaction, especially networking, is recognised as an important success factor by the studies presented. Interaction itself in the context of farm tourism again strongly leans to entrepreneur who normally is in contact with guests in all phases of their visit. Customer service skills are obviously required in service industry. Customers should also have some role in development – they should be listened and their feedback taken as a constructive element and develop business accordingly. Therefore, it is expected that receiving and responding to customer feedback, for instance online, is a success factor. Hautamäki (2000) found out that especially long-lasting customer relations are important in rural business. Ryymin (2008) suggests that later in the future co-operation with industry's larger businesses and environmental responsibility become central success factors.

## **5 Research implementation**

The aim of this thesis is to identify success factors in farm tourism. In order to accomplish this, qualitative research is considered as the most suitable method. The research is conducted during academic spring semester 2016, covering months from January to May. Interviews were accomplished in period from 21st March to 4th April. For practical reasons they were conducted in Finnish.

### **5.1 Research method**

Research problem defines which method is the most suitable in order to answer the research question. Since there are no theories or models on success factors in Finnish farm tourism, the topic must be approached by qualitative research. Understanding of a phenomenon is always generated through qualitative research. It proceeds inductively, from practice to theory. Conversely, quantitative research is deductive – proceeding from theory to practice. It could be conducted first when there is enough knowledge and understanding generated of a phenomenon. Qualitative research indeed does not aim to generalise but to understand, as is the aim of this thesis – understanding and identifying the factors behind successful farm tourism enterprises. (Kananen, 2014, 16-26)

### **5.2 Data collection**

For this thesis, both primary and secondary data are collected. Triangulation, meaning data collection from several, different sources is applied. Secondary data is gathered from documents such as literature, researches, webpages and statistics. It is collected in order to have an idea of the phenomenon in question before creating interview forms. Additionally, triangulation is a simple way to enhance reliability of results. (Kananen, 2014, 77, 152)

Primary data is collected by interviewing. Theme interviews were chosen to be conducted thanks to several benefits of the form suitable for this research. They are applicable alternative when phenomenon is unknown and research aims to generate understanding of it. Theme interviews are rather open discussions between interviewer and interviewee, or informant. Discussions consist around themes interviewer decides in advance. Interview frame is prepared but it does not have to be strictly followed – instead, additional questions can be asked as interview proceeds. Informant is also allowed to raise relevant issues to discussion. (Kananen, 2014, 76-79)

Interview frames are based on the hypothesised success factors in farm tourism (see chapter 4.3) which again are derived from existing researches introduced (see chapter 4.2). Construction of the diamond of success by Kamensky (see figures 2 & 3) is applied. Therefore, themes of the interview questions are strategy, leadership or management, knowhow and interaction. Background information of the enterprise and entrepreneur(s) are also collected, because entrepreneurial skills were identified important in success of a farm tourism enterprise. That is why, entrepreneur is also included in the modified diamond of success (see figure 3).

Unstructured questions of each theme are generated based on the introduced research findings and challenges farm tourism faces. All the questions are unstructured as is characteristic to qualitative research and theme interviewing. Besides, it would be impossible to apply structured questions when answer alternatives are not known nor at least unequivocal in advance. Furthermore, structured questions might direct informants' answers or lead to very narrow answers – open questions generate wider and more reliable data. (Kananen, 2014, 79-80)

Interviewees are farm tourism entrepreneurs running a successful farm tourism enterprise in Finland (see definition of “successful farm tourism enterprise” in chapter 3). Interview questions (see appendixes 1 and 2) were generated based on the findings from secondary data collected. Interviews were conducted in Finnish due to practical reasons; it is the native language of both interviewer and interviewees why using it makes the situation more natural than it would be if interviews were conducted in English. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and by phone in a period of two weeks from March 21<sup>st</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup>. Interview duration ranged between 27 to 64 minutes. They were all recorded in order to enable word-for-word transcribing.

### **5.3 Data analysis**

Prior to data analysis raw data generated must be handled so that it can be analysed. First, recorded interviews were transcribed to text documents. Transcribing is done in order to have all the data in same form and thus easily comparable. Transcription was accomplished exactly word-for-word, but other factors, such as faces and tones of voice were not documented. (Kananen, 2014, 101-103) Implementation occurred simply by listening record meanwhile writing it down. In this phase, interviews were documented anonymously named as respondent one, respondent two and further on.

After all the material was transcribed, it was coded. It is compacting and simplifying material, which would otherwise be too large to analyse. There are technological solutions

and programmes for coding but material in this research was small enough to be coded manually. In practise, it means that text documents are reviewed from the viewpoint of research problem – answers to research question, what are the success factors in farm tourism, are therefore looked for. Similar answers are connected with common codes, which then together become larger entities, categories. This phase is done in order to perceive the generated data as an entity and find themes, models and orders structuring, which enables analysis. In this research categorises from theoretical approach relating to success model are prior to analysis known and applied. Findings from interview answers were assembled to categories in a table divided to strategy, leadership or management, knowhow and interaction. This method enables also counting amount of each potential success factor mentioned in interviews, so resemblances and contentions are easily identified. In this phase, line between qualitative and quantitative can be considered vague. (Kananen, 2014, 103-105, 108)

After data was handled, next step was to find a holistic solution to the research problem. Since all the interviewees run indeed successful farm tourism enterprises, factors that all, or at least majority of them have in common are found as success factors. Results are first presented as they are. Afterwards they are reviewed with further interpretation and conclusions of them are drawn.

#### **5.4 Validity and reliability**

Both validity and reliability are indicators of trustworthiness in scientific researches. It is important to pay attention on the issue already when planning the research. Nothing can be done afterwards in order to add validity and reliability. (Kananen, 2014, 145-147)

Research is valid once it measures what it is meant to (Kananen, 2014, 148) and that is next evaluated in the research in question. Validity is ensured by using the right research method. Choosing qualitative research is justified by the nature of research problem and lack of previous research on topic (see chapter 5.1). Validity throughout the thesis process strengthened by keeping the research problem and aim in mind in all the phases. It can be questioned whether criteria for choosing the interviewees was scientifically justifiable. However, reasons leading to the method applied are presented and consideration of its suitability is left to each reader's own discretion. Criterion validity again is reached thanks to reflecting results of equivalent researches to the one in question already prior to creating interview frames. When results of similar researches are same, criterion validity is good. (Kananen, 2014, 150)

It might have been beneficial to have another round of interviews, as is often needed with theme interviewing, after all the first ones were analysed. There were issues that raised in the interviews but since all the issues did not come up in all the interviews, they are not comparable with other presented success factors in farm tourism. In a renewed round of interviews, these issues could have been asked from all the participants. It was anyhow skipped due to lack of time. With more efficiently planning the research procedure this lack could have been passed. Overall, validity of this research is considered good thanks to results gained answering to the research question presented in the beginning.

Reliability means persistence of the results – if research was conducted again, results would be the same. (Kananen, 2014, 147) Generating the interview frames quite thorough in advance can be considered to add reliability. Whether discussion was more open, same issues would perhaps not come up with all the entrepreneurs and individual observations would have remained uncommented in the analysis phase. However, other round of interviews would have been beneficial also in order to increase reliability.

Limitation to farm tourism enterprises offering accommodation services may increase reliability. If all farm tourism enterprises, including activity and day-visitors based ones, were researched and not differed from each other, results might be somewhat different. It can be assumed that for instance a destination attracting day-visitors is more influenced by its location and accessibility from major market generating areas - visitors would perhaps not want to use too much time to reach a place where they would spend only some hours. Additionally, conducting interviews in a rather short period is considered to add reliability of the results. Tourism industry is easily affected by several factors, such as accidents, that in a longer period answers might have become influenced.

There is always risk of subjectivity in qualitative research because researcher is in connection and charge of data collection and analysing. Several decisions are made during the process, such as what is asked and who are interviewed. (Kananen, 2014, 25) However, acknowledging this risk alone leads to effort towards as objective approach as possible. Another risk is that interpretation of words and sentences can vary from person to person, because language indeed is equivocal. (Kananen, 2014, 25) Additional challenge in the case of this research was that primary data collected was translated from Finnish language to English. Effort was anyhow put in order to find well-translated words as equal to each other as possible.

## 6 Success factors in farm tourism enterprises in Finland

In order to identify success factors in farm tourism in Finland, qualitative research was conducted. Theme interviews with four Finnish farm tourism entrepreneurs took place and in this chapter, results are presented. Order follows the interview frame generated basing on Kamensky's success model.

### 6.1 Background information

As is part of defining farm tourism, all the enterprises included operate in agriculture besides tourism. Forestry is also practised in some estates. Three out of four entrepreneurs consider tourism as their main livelihood. Last founded of the included enterprises has operated since 2005, whereas oldest is found 1981.

Satisfied guests are significant indicator of success for all the entrepreneurs. Contentment can arise in different contexts, for instance through direct feedback, "word of mouth" – marketing or returning customers.

*"...a new customer inquired and made meal reservation for a group thanks to good feedback he/she had heard about good food and service we offer and he/she wanted to come him/herself to visit, too. It is always best when it comes kind of "out of nowhere", unexpected. It is wonderful." Respondent two.*

Additionally, income higher than expenses and evidence of honour from others, for instance diplomas rewarded, are considered to indicate success.

### 6.2 Strategy

All four enterprises offer accommodation in variety of premises. In three destinations, guests can stay in lakefront cottages, whereas in one lakefront is further away. Accommodation can also take place in rooms in granary buildings or main farmhouses. Meeting facilities with needed equipment are provided by each enterprise, as well as food and coffee services upon order. One of the included enterprises runs a restaurant open daily. Saunas are included in majority of cottages, and a hot tub is rentable in each destination. Three enterprises rent saunas also without accommodation. Events or celebrations can be organised in all the destinations in facilities suitable for groups of different sizes. In addition to meal services, one of the enterprises provides catering. Recreational activities offered by enterprise itself or ones nearby, are many. Main

proportion of them are connected with nature, including for instance forest excursions and fishing. There are animals on all the farms included. Horseback riding school functions in connection with one of the enterprises, as well as a farm shop where farm products and handicrafts are sold. Direct agricultural activities offered are very limited. In one enterprise camp school groups can learn about farming process and plant vegetables themselves, and another offers possibility to milk a cow - once accomplished, a diploma is rewarded. There are animals on all the farms and that can be significant especially to town citizens.

*“These days, people rarely see animals, or even have possibility for that. It has turned into strength for us – here one sees animals all the time.”*

*Respondent three.*

In all destinations, summer is the high season mainly following vacation period of Finnish schools. Additionally, two entrepreneurs mentioned Christmas and/or New Year as seasons of their own. Seasonality is aimed to be balanced in different ways. Meeting groups and business travellers are specially targeted in low seasons. Some services and preparedness is lowered in some destinations; for instance, bed and breakfast service is offered only in summer time or cottages are heated only when pre-booked guests are arriving. Seasonal pricing is to varying extent practised and considered important, more in some enterprises than in others.

In three destinations accommodation in bed & breakfast –style is sold. Price of cottages in all enterprises again includes solely accommodation – breakfast is an additional service, as well as linens, towels and final clean up can be. Readymade packages are sold by each enterprise. However, they can be considered as difficult and perhaps unnecessary products, since changes almost inevitably occur. Therefore, selling accommodation with requested additional services is practised by every enterprise. Prices in various sales channels are aimed at keeping equal. It varies, whether accommodation is sold in a specific price per room or by person. Level of following competitors' pricing varies but is still done. However, it is taken into account that pricing of one's own services should not base on competitors' pricing, but instead relate to own level and expenses.

*“One must set the price on such level that it covers one's own expenses and is reasonable in that way. It [competitors' pricing] cannot be grounds to formatting own pricing.” Respondent four.*

When it comes to marketing, all enterprises have their own webpages and company profiles on Facebook. Other social media platforms are not widely used, as besides



Facebook, only one is present in VKontakte and Instagram. Most popular sales channels are directly contacting the enterprise and Booking.com. Additionally, farm tourism products are sold in Matkamaalle.fi, Lomarengas, Mökkiavain, Finnish Hostel Association, travel agencies as well as in one case through company's own reservation system.

Location came up in different contexts as an important factor. One entrepreneur mentioned central location and easy accessibility as success factors. Additionally, sufficient roads and guide signs are considered important.

*“It [marketing] has also to do with new signs by the roads. It brings us many new customers from nearby. Good road network and maintaining it is important here at the countryside.” Respondent three.*

Other local businesses attracting tourists again generate demand for accommodation. Peaceful and natural rural location is considered as a unique selling point in comparison with other types of accommodation providers, especially ones in urban environment.

For the time being, none of the entrepreneurs plans any large material investing. Facelift in premises, development of food services and increasing additional sales and room occupancy rate were mentioned as goals and actions to be taken in the near future.

### **6.3 Leadership or management**

Motivations behind entering farm tourism industry are various. Whereas some had previous positive experiences in the field, one saw demand for accommodation services in the area. Suitable circumstances for practising tourism have been, if not motivation, perhaps contributory factor for some. Family values are visible in operation. Authenticity is an important value existent in different contexts – environment, people and experiences. Domesticity and locality are appreciated and this can be seen for instance in ingredients used in meal services. Other values mentioned were safety, trustworthiness, traditional environment and manners, tidiness and valuation of one's own effort. Business related decisions are made among personnel involved. Development of facilities according to increasing customer expectations is considered important. Two mentioned different quality systems, such as Quality1000, as sort of a framework based on which development occurs.

Besides that running a farm tourism enterprise often is strongly engaging, it can also be difficult to draw the line between work and leisure time.

*“One cannot really go anywhere nor plan holidays, because one must be at home in case of receiving a good offer. Last time we were somewhere together was 10 years ago, we were 10 days in a same place. However, even during holidays one must answer to offers.” Respondent one.*

Therefore, it is a positive finding that interviewees take care of their own wellbeing in several ways. Variability of tasks in everyday life and hobbies, even work related, are considered as factors increasing wellbeing. Meanwhile holidays are important it of course varies from person to person what one wants to do – some enjoy travelling while some like to stay at home. Low seasons can be taken as a chance to relax and prepare for busier season.

#### **6.4 Knowhow**

As addition to previously handled wellbeing, it is to be noticed that none of the entrepreneurs runs their business alone. Tasks are often divided among persons involved according to their educational or otherwise gained skills and competences.

*“I do basically the sales and he is more in the role of the chef. Then again I take care of invoicing and paperwork, and with finances we deal together – he has the education for that.” Respondent one.*

Besides sharing responsibility among own employees, services can be outsourced, as laundry services are by three entrepreneurs. Webpages are outsourced in two enterprises, bookkeeping, ploughing and agricultural tasks each in one.

*“For example, I outsourced all road levelling and ploughing and noticed that a lot of time and money was saved. I was able to focus on my own tasks and the bill for the work is not at all that big. Besides, one can be sure that roads are in good condition for customers. [...] One does not need to invest in nor maintain equipment. I find it quite reasonable.” Respondent four.*

Summer employees preferably with experience from previous seasons are hired in one destination and this for its part ensures good quality also during the high season.

Each interviewee has Finnish as native language. Mainly English is used with international guests, meanwhile German and Russian is known and used in two separate enterprises. Basic Swedish skills are also existing but the language is not often used. It is to be noticed that this question was inadvertently skipped in one interview and therefore result is based

only on three answers. Besides practical skills, personal characteristics are important. During interviews, flexibility came up most often. Two considers patience, both with customers and entrepreneurship itself, important. Other personal characteristics or factors positively influencing success of farm tourism enterprise were mentioned to be authenticity, enthusiasm and self-development. Additionally, one should have imagination and will to work in the service industry. Taking advantage of one's own strengths in everyday work is beneficial.

In three interviews, educational and professional background of spouse is acknowledged and consequently included in results. In all four enterprises, there is at least one person with vocational qualification in business and administration, as well as some education in restaurant field. Additionally, three out of four entrepreneurs have vocational qualification as rural tourism entrepreneur, and two as product developer. They have also taken part in different courses and seminars and so gradually increased their knowledge and education concerning the field.

All have entrepreneur parents worked in agriculture or other industry. Parents of two entrepreneurs have operated in farm tourism field, through which relevant experience prior to continuing family enterprise or founding one's own is gained. However, after several years of operation in one's own business, each entrepreneur has learned a lot through experience. Three of the entrepreneurs have been in charge of the business since its foundation meanwhile one is continuing a family enterprise.

*"Experience is the strongest background. However, bit by bit we have attended all kind of courses and seminars, and generally actively participated in travel and tourism events." Respondent three.*

Each interviewee has been and still is actively involved in organisational activities, for example in Lomalaidun Ry and Finnish Association of Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs. Professional contacts and events are important channels in order to stay updated about the industry development. Otherwise, none of the interviewees says to follow industry trends very actively, neither nationally nor globally.

## **6.5 Interaction**

Each entrepreneur clearly has a large social network on both professional and personal level. Everyone is more or less in contact with colleagues in the field. Ideas and tips are shared to some extent, and peer support is considered important.

*“It [networking] is absolutely important, worth it. As a new entrepreneur, I would definitely join these kind of organisational activities, because one learns all the time from colleagues. One gets to see and hear how others have taken care of a business for long time. Everything must not be learned through the hard way – things can be done right and sometimes quite a lot of money can be saved.” Respondent four.*

However, two interviewees considered co-operation with nearby cities and communities quite inefficient. Even though farm tourism destinations were mentioned on city tourism websites, they do not often receive as much visibility as other alternatives. Out of events in the field, entrepreneurs interviewed mentioned to participate in for instance annual seminar of rural tourism entrepreneurs and developers and study trip abroad occurring each autumn organised by Finnish Association of Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs. In three interviews, it came up that in surrounding environment there are several other businesses and co-operation with them is usual and efficient. Recreational activities are to varying extent operated by other entrepreneurs or in co-operation with them.

All enterprises serve some amounts of regular customers. Longest customer relations date back to first years of business operations. Entrepreneurs interviewed take care of customer relations in different ways. Two mentioned to stay in touch with regular customers also when they are not visiting. For instance, business announcements and special day greetings are sent. Special rates can be offered to regular customers, but mainly in low seasons. However, one entrepreneur mentioned that mistake of waiting for old customers to come back should not be made. Finding new customers is therefore important, despite it often takes more time and effort.

*“Many tourism enterprises have stopped developing when expecting to receive the same customers again and again. Then one does not maintain facilities nor raise prices. Expenses anyhow increase and therefore one cannot automatically... [Keep the prices unchanged nor give too many discounts].” Respondent three.*

Social skills of the entrepreneur are of course important. Presence, authenticity and personal recognition are considered as differentiating factors in comparison with for instance customer service in chain hotels.

*"Of course it is presence that is [high quality service], not everything can be measured in money. Customer often needs someone who listens, and in such situation I aim to be there, present with the customer." "We have homely atmosphere here, and we are flexible as is needed with groups when there are changes in timetables or programmes. Flexibility must exist to some extent. [Those things indicate that] we are authentic people."*

*Respondent two.*

Customer feedback is collected in all the enterprises. It is received through sales channels such as Booking.com and Lomarengas. Customers are also directly asked feedback during their stay but written forms or surveys are not widely used. It varies whether customer feedback online is answered to. Usage of TripAdvisor is recently started or underway in two enterprises. Activity in other social media platforms is under further consideration and probably more focus in the near future. Additionally, customers are asked how they got to know about a destination. Besides marketing channels introduced, word of mouth –marketing plays a significant role.

## 7 Conclusions and development suggestions

Key findings of the research are collected in the table (see figure 4) below. Findings from background information (see chapter 6.1) are divided to categories suitable and therefore are not in a category of their own. Results are once more reviewed with aim to interpret findings and draw further conclusions of them. Additionally, relevant development suggestions are presented. The whole thesis process is concluded in info graphics (see appendix 4) which is conducted in Finnish again for practical reasons; it is mainly targeted for commissioner and interviewees to get a quick overlook on the research and its findings generated thanks to their contribution.

<b>Strategy</b>	Expanded, authentic product of high quality; especially cottages Online sales and marketing channels Central location, easy accessibility
<b>Leadership or management</b>	Adapting; market changes, customer expectations, industry development Personal motivation Wellbeing
<b>Knowhow</b>	Education Experience
<b>Interaction</b>	Networks; business and peer support, customer relations

Figure 4, key success factors in farm tourism in Finland, according to findings

### **Expanded, authentic product of high quality is a success factor.**

By expanded product is meant the wide scale of components offered by enterprises; accommodation, meal- and coffee services, meeting and events, recreational activities and even catering. This may indicate need to attract customers from as wide market as possible. Expanded product can be considered beneficial especially for year-round operations, since for instance business and leisure customers travel in different periods and consequently cover for each other. One must anyhow pay attention that quality is maintained even during changing demand, for instance by hiring extra help for high seasons or having one's own holidays during the low seasons. Authenticity came up in different contexts as considered success factor. It is visible in working farm environment, and activities offered as well as people running the enterprise and customer service they provide. However, the finding that main proportion of entrepreneurs included consider

tourism as their main livelihood indicated that to succeed, tourism should be prioritised over agriculture. Since both ends of the continuum, authenticity and tourism, as presented by Busby & Rendle (2000, see chapter 2) are important, one should find the balance between the two. Additionally, popularity of lakeside cottages offered questions whether farm tourism alone would be a successful business. Lakeside cottages without connection to a farm and agriculture would be rather categorised as rural tourism. However, they also can be considered truly authentic, traditional Finnish products; a cottage by a lakeside, with sauna and rowing boat is very idyllic scene associated with Finland, also by many foreigners and therefore assumingly a good product. Sales potential of cottage tourism in Finland is recognised and work towards reaching that potential is done mainly by Lomarengas Oy, the oldest and most well-known company with wide selection of rentable cottages in Finland. (Nurminen, 2015; Lomarengas.fi, 2016).

### **Online marketing and sales channels are success factors.**

Usage of online channels is reasonable in two ways. First, they can be run in low costs or even free of charge and second, they have potential to reach wide market. Fewness of different channels for instance in social media was identified but according to results more active approach will be applied in the near future. Additionally, there is a lack of English content and generally marketing targeted to international tourism. A lack of larger sales channels for farm tourism destinations was also recognised. Matkamaalle.fi, the largest currently functioning sales channels of rural holidays in Finland covers only 15 destinations. However, in April 2016 a new webpage, Kylään.fi was launched. It is the largest data bank and network of village tourism in Finland. It responds to a big challenge rural tourism faces – difficulty of finding, buying and even accessing products. (Ruusunen, 2016) For a customer it is an easy-to-use search engine for rural destinations. Rural entrepreneurs again gain marketing and visibility needed. Villages of member entrepreneurs are introduced on the website, which enhances the holistic development of the whole community. As a member, entrepreneur gets ideas for instance to product development and approaching new customers. (Kylään.fi, 2016)

### **Location is a success factor.**

Farm tourism destination should be easily accessible by both distance and quality of road infrastructure and guiding signs. In case of farm tourism location rarely is a strategic decision. It is anyhow beneficial to consider locations' potential to success before starting a business. Central location easily accessible from several cities and nearby tourist attractions may contribute to tourist flow but is not a necessity to success.

**Adapting is a success factor.**

Adapting to varying markets is important in different aspects. Seasonality as a challenge faced is responded to in various ways. Seasonal pricing is practised and considered more or less important. That for its part balances seasonal changes in demand and supports year-round operations. Additionally, by selling for as high price as possible during the high seasons maximises the income and is therefore reasonable. High quality of facilities and additional improvement of it according to raising customer expectations is important. Popularity of high quality products, for instance star classified cottages take a further step from “tourism on farm” towards “farm tourism” as in Busby & Rendles’ (2000) continuum. Besides following customer expectations, also keeping one updated in the industry development is important. All the interviewees educate themselves continuously on different courses and seminars. Main market change requesting adaption in Finland has lately been the sudden drop in the number of Russian tourists. In situation like this, it is vital to find new markets. Tourists from middle-European countries, for instance Germany, have already previously been or have lately become a significant group of international tourists in farm tourism destinations. As recognised in article referenced earlier (Nurminen, 2015) there is potential to further growth of middle-European countries as tourist generating area to Finland. It is also said that quality of services and marketing more towards these specific markets should be improved in order to reach the full potential. In interviews it came up that farm and rural tourism are not included to national and communal tourism organisations as visibly and efficiently as they could. However, uniqueness of Finland lies indeed in nature and countryside whereas cities all over Europe can be considered rather similar. Selling product different and unique from other might increase tourism in Finland and so be beneficial for not only farm tourism but also the tourism industry in general.

**Personal motivation is a success factor.**

The entrepreneurs themselves consider satisfied customers as an indicator of success. This reveals the personal motivation to the industry and strive towards good customer service. Meanwhile this is obviously important and often indeed associated with farm tourism, question raises whether in order for farm tourism to grow as an industry more focus and strive towards generating more income should occur. However, farm tourism enterprises mainly as small family businesses seldom aim to such growth. Additionally, authenticity and sort of intimacy of farm tourism and customer service offered would suffer.



**Wellbeing is a success factor.**

Running a farm tourism enterprise is an engaging job and line between work and leisure may be hard to define. For these reasons taking care of one's wellbeing is considered especially important when it comes to farm tourism. Previously discussed motivation to operate in the industry has a role also in wellbeing – working with what one enjoys obviously makes one happier and so more wellbeing. In service industry it is important because one is constantly a customer servant and has a significant role in customer satisfaction which again influences business success. Hiring employees, outsourcing part of the services or limiting operation to only part of a year instead of year-round operation are alternatives in decreasing workload one has to manage.

**Education is a success factor.**

Farm tourism is blamed for unprofessional operation but when it comes to entrepreneurs interviewed for this research that is not the case. Relevant education indeed is found to support professional operation and management of a business. It is perhaps the unsuccessful farm tourism enterprises that are unprofessionally run and so can lead to bad reputation of the whole industry. Unfortunately, no actions can have been taken towards this problem because anyone has a right to found a business. Paying more attention on different quality certifications by both entrepreneurs and customers might be beneficial. Enterprises would have to fulfil certain criteria in order to be awarded with the certification and customers travelling to a destination with such would be guaranteed of a specific level of quality.

**Experience is a success factor.**

All the interviewees have operated in the industry at least a decade and main proportion of them also has other relevant experience prior to their current position. Experience is considered by many as the main source of learning to work in the industry. One starting a farm tourism enterprise should be patient because not many succeeds right from the beginning.

**Networking is a success factor.**

Networking all with colleagues, entrepreneurs from other industries and customers is beneficial to a business. Among Finnish farm tourism entrepreneurs there seems to be quite communal atmosphere – people know each other and peer support and business tips are shared. Activity in different organisations keeps one updated in the industry development and helps to maintain old and find new colleague contacts. Active participation can also be a good way to gain visibility and so additional marketing. Networking with other entrepreneurs, especially ones operating nearby enables

cooperation that can expand one's own product. For its part this has to do with location since attractions nearby may generate more demand for farm tourism destination, too. Networking with customers can occur in any situation and is an important way to increase the number of potential visitors. Gaining new customer relations as well as maintaining regular ones is important. Overall, it is beneficial to take the advantage of any possibility to gain visibility and new potential customers.

### **7.1 Trustworthiness and ethical issues**

Trustworthiness of the research was aimed to maintain during the whole process. The information in theory part strictly bases on the references applied. Interview questions were tested prior to conducting interviews with the entrepreneurs themselves. Additionally, an expert in the farm tourism industry chose interviewees. Results reflect to theory reviewed and can therefore be considered trustworthy. Overall, choices made are justified.

Ethical issues were considered throughout the thesis process. All the facts presented are clearly referenced in accordance to research principles. The representative of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences with significant experience in research reviewed interview questions and offered great help in order to modify questions so that they are pleasant and easy to answer to, but still generate needed data. Informants were introduced with the research and its aim before interviews. Anonymity was ensured by documenting the transcribed versions of interviews without indicating names and all in all, participation was of course voluntary. Interviewees were in advance informed about recording the interviews. Introduction chapters of enterprises (see chapter 3.1) were reviewed and accepted by entrepreneurs concerned before publishing the thesis.

### **7.2 Suggestions for further research**

Issue of struggling agriculture indeed is actual and has lately received attention in media. Needed actions are not taken and farmers find decision-makers lack ability to understand the severity of economic plight occurring on several farms. "Tractor march", farmers' protest to send a message to Finnish parliament and government to make quick decisions to improve the situation, took place March 11<sup>th</sup> and was an item of news at its time. (MTK, 2016a) It is clear farm tourism is not a solution to the whole problem but instead a minor possibility. Therefore, more research could be conducted on other diversified industries and rural development in general. Alternatively, other types of rural tourism enterprises could be in deeper focus.

When it comes to success factors in farm tourism, results of this thesis could be ensured by further research. In science, everything is and should always be questioned. Knowledge generated through qualitative research can be ensured for instance by quantitative research, including larger sample. Additionally, since interviews are conducted solely with successful entrepreneurs in the field, there is no comparison between them and ones who are not successful. Perhaps a farm tourism enterprise has not succeeded even if possessing all the same factors than some of the interviewed ones. Role of luck and coincidence may then play a bigger role than results suggest.

### **7.3 Evaluation of the thesis process and self-evaluation**

Interviews were aimed to time so that high season in farm tourism nor farming season would not yet have started. However, in the rather short period of interviews there occurred rural tourism seminar to which many of the interviewees attended. Easter weekend was also in this two weeks period. Luckily, despite their busy schedules, majority of entrepreneurs asked to take part in the research participated. In the end of the thesis process, more flexibility with the schedule could have been useful. Another round of interviews might have been beneficial so that questions raised from data generated could have been asked. However, main success factors in Finnish farm tourism were identified and so research question is answered.

During the thesis process success model chosen as a base for empirical part and interview frames was questioned for its suitability to farm tourism enterprises. More effort might have been put on exploring alternatives. In the end, it was noticed that categories found suitable by Kollerud & Melleby (2007), qualities of establisher; network; and strategy, would have been applicable also to the findings of this research. In its current categorises there is some overlapping. However, usage of “the diamond of success” by Kamensky (2014) is justified by its author’s experience and consideration that the model is applicable from individuals to large corporations.

Author herself learned a lot during the thesis process. This is the first research individually conducted and therefore at times challenging but simultaneously very educative experience. Patience needed to review the theory was useful and author learned to more efficiently find referenced as the thesis proceeded. Qualitative interviews were the first ones individually conducted and it is considered as an experience possibly useful later in work life.

Better image of Finland as a tourism destination and diversity of the country as such was gained. Domestic tourism became more of an interest for the author. She now better

realises the potential of the unique Finnish countryside and nature in the international market. It is interesting to follow how tourism development in Finland will proceed from now on and whether farm and rural tourism will become more significant part of it. Whether possibility appears author would be willing to gain professional experience in rural tourism development of which she through this thesis process gained at least a hallow image.

Success factors in farm tourism in Finland as identified by this research are perhaps something one might have assumed prior to conducting the research. However, they are now researched and in addition to success factors other important issues raised from the data and theory generated and reviewed. Challenges farm tourism and rural development face have been recognised and will hopefully be of inspiration for further research.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Haastattelukysymykset

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää suomalaisen maatilamatkailun menestystekijöitä. Tutkimus toteutetaan opinnäytetyönä ja sen toimeksiantajana toimii Lomalaidun Ry. Vastaukset käsitellään nimettöminä eikä niitä voida yhdistää vastaajaan. Tulokset lisäävät toimeksiantajan tietämystä sekä auttavat maatilamatkailuyrittäjiä, sekä jo alalla toimivia sekä sille aikovia, arvioimaan omaa yritystään ja huomioimaan mahdollisia kehittämistarpeita. Opinnäytetyön on määrä valmistua toukokuussa 2016 ja se julkaistaan englannin kielisenä nimellä *Success factors in farm tourism – qualitative study of six successful farm tourism enterprises in Finland*. Tutkimuksen toteuttaa Juuli Vähäuski, matkailualan opiskelija Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulusta, Porvoon kampukselta.

#### Toteutus

Haastateltava

Aika

Kesto

#### Taustatietoa

Kerro vapaasti yrityksestäsi.

Kerro vapaasti itsestäsi ja omasta taustastasi.

#### Menestys

Milloin ja missä tilanteissa koet onnistuneesi yrittäjänä?

Mitä asioita asiakkaanne arvostavat? Mikä erottaa yrityksesi kilpailijoistasi?

#### Strategia

Mitä palveluita tarjoatte? Mikä on mielestäsi korkealaatuinen palvelu? Miten laadun tasaisuus varmistetaan olosuhteiden muuttuessa? (Esim. kausivaihtelu)

Mitä markkinointikanavia käytätte? Entä mitä myyntikanavia?

Miten palvelunne on hinnoiteltu? Onko hinnastonne suhteutettu kilpailijoiden hinnastoihin?

Mitä tavoitteita sinulla on yrityksesi jatkoa ajatellen? Pyritkö laajentamaan yritystäsi? Mitkä seikat vaikuttavat päätökseesi?

#### Johtaminen

Mikä motivoi sinua maatilamatkailuyrityksen perustamiseen/Mikä motivoi sinua työskentelemään maatilamatkailuyrityksessä? Miksi päädyit matkailualalle?

Mitkä arvot kuuluvat joka päiväiseen työntekoosi?

Miten yrityksessäsi tehdään päätöksiä?

Miten varmistat oman jaksamisesi?

Miten kausivaihtelut näkyvät palveluidesi kysynnässä? Miten tasoitat vaihtelua esimerkiksi vuodenaikojen välillä?

### **Osaaminen**

Mitä osaamista itselläsi on? Minkä alan osaamisen koet tärkeäksi maatilamatkailuyrityksen toimintaa ajatellen? Mitkä ovat omia henkilökohtaisia vahvuuksiasi, joiden koet myönteisesti vaikuttavan yritykseesi?

Mihin tarvitset ulkopuolista apua? Mistä saat tarvittavaa ulkopuolista apua?

Seuraatko alan kehitystä ja trendejä? Sovelletaanko niitä yrityksessäsi?

### **Verkostoituminen**

Onko sinulla mielestäsi laaja sosiaalinen verkosto?

Millaista yhteistyötä teet muiden yritysten kanssa?

Mitä kautta asiakkaat saavat tietää yrityksestäsi? Osallistutko alan tapahtumiin, esimerkiksi seminaareihin?

Miten asiakkaat huomioidaan yrityksen toiminnassa?

Tuleeko mieleesi muita tekijöitä, joilla on positiivinen vaikutus menestymiseen?

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview questions**

Research aims to identifying success factors in Finnish farm tourism. It is conducted as a bachelor thesis commissioned by Lomalaidun Ry. Answer are handled anonymously and they cannot be connected with the interviewee. Results are addition commissioner knowledge and beneficial for farm tourism entrepreneurs, both the ones already in the industry and ones planning to enter it. Bachelor thesis *Success factors in farm tourism – qualitative study of six successful farm tourism enterprises in Finland*, will be finished during May 2016 and it will be published in English. Research is conducted by Juuli Vähäuski, a student in Degree Programme in Tourism in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Porvoo campus.

### **Implementation**

Interviewee

Date and time

Duration

### **Background information**

Tell about your enterprise in your own words.

Tell about yourself and your background in your own words.

### **Success**

When and in what situations do you feel like you have succeeded as an entrepreneur?

What do your customers appreciate in your enterprise? What differs your enterprise from its competitors?

### **Strategy**

What services do you offer? In your opinion, what is high-quality service? How is stable quality ensured in changing circumstances? (For instance seasonal changes)  
Which marketing channels are use? How about which sales channels?  
How is your service priced? Are your prices in relation to competitors' prices?  
What are your goals with your enterprise? Do you aim to extend your enterprise? Which factors affect your decision?

### **Leadership/management**

What motivated you to found a farm tourism enterprise? / What motivated you to work in a farm tourism enterprise? Why did you end up to travel and tourism industry?  
Which values are part of your everyday work?

How are decisions made in your enterprise?  
How do you ensure your own well-being?  
How seasonal changes in demand are visible? How can the changes be evened?

### **Knowhow**

What knowhow you have? What kind of knowhow you find important in running a farm tourism enterprise? What are you personal strengths, for instance characteristics, you find positively influencing your enterprise?  
Whish issues you need external help with? Where do you receive the needed external help?  
Do you follow industry development and trends? Are they applied to your enterprise?

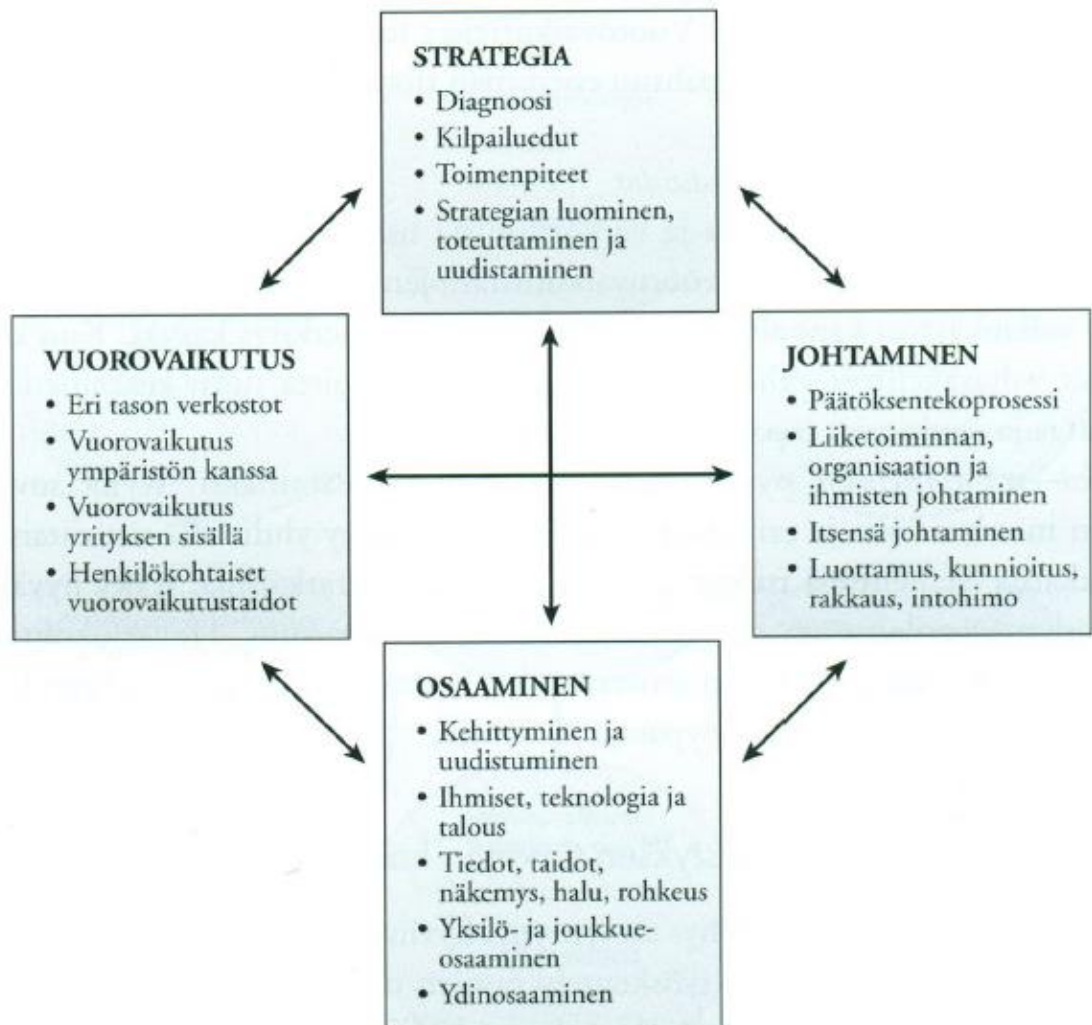
### **Networking**

Do you consider having a large social network?  
What kind of co-operation you do with other enterprises?  
How do people find out about your enterprise? Do you take part in industry events, such as seminars?  
How are customer relations taken care of?

Do you come up with any other factors that might positively influence on success in farm tourism?

### Appendix 3

The original diamond of success, *Menestyksen timantti*, as in Kamensky, 2015, 358.



### Appendix 4

Infographics reviewing the research.

## Opinnäytetyö, Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulu

Juuli Vähäuski

Lomalaidun Ry

Laadullinen  
tutkimus,  
kevätlukukausi  
2016

Kotimainen maatalous on ajautunut vaikeaan kannattavuustilanteeseen. Tilannetta ovat viime aikoina vaikeuttaneet muun muassa Venäjän tuontikielto ja tukimaksatusten lykkääminen. Haastavat olosuhteet voivat kannustaa maanviljelijöitä monialaistamaan toimintaansa. Matkailu nähdään tehokkaana työkaluna myös maaseudun kehittämistä ja elinvoimaisuuden ylläpitämistä ajatellen, koska alalle on ominaista hyödyttää muita lähialueen yrityksiä välillisesti. Kuitenkin, jotta nämä hyödyt saavutettaisiin, on yrityksen menestyttävä. Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena olikin selvittää, mitkä ovat suomalaisen maatilamatkailun menestystekijät.

# Maatilamatkailun menestystekijät

## Aineiston kerääminen ja analysointi

Lomakivi

Mäkelän  
lomatuvut

Ilolan  
maatilamatkailu

Hyvölään  
talo

Aineisto kerättiin teemahaastattelulla toimeksiantajan ehdottamilta maatilamatkailuyrittäjiltä. Kysymykset luotiin aiempiin tutkimuksiin ja muuhun aiheeseen liittyvään teoriaan pohjautuen. Haastattelut pidettiin kasvotusten ja puhelimitse helmi- ja maaliskuun vaihteessa.

Vastaukset analysoitiin nimettömänä ja niistä etsittiin vastausta nimenomaan tutkimuskysymykseen, mitkä ovat suomalaisen maatilamatkailun menestystekijät. Tuloksia läpikäydessä esitetään myös kehittämisehdotuksia, joista osa ilmeni haastatteluiden aikana. Teemahaastatteluille ominaista onkin, että vastaajalla on mahdollisuus nostaa esiin haluamiansa asioita, mikä mahdollistaa "ylimääräisen" aineiston kerääntymisen.

## Tulokset

Laaja, aito ja  
korkealaatuinen tuote

Keskeinen sijainti,  
helppo  
saavutettavuus

Muun muassa kausivaihteluihin ja  
muuttuviin markkinatilanteisiin  
sopeutuminen

Henkilökohtainen motivaatio

Koulutus

Online myynti- ja  
markkinointikanavat

Omasta  
hyvinvoinnista ja  
jaksamisesta  
huolehtiminen

Kokemus

Verkostoituminen, kollegat, muut  
yrittäjät, erityisesti lähialueilta, asiakkaat

### Kehitysehdotuksia

Yksi laajempi maatilamatkailukohteiden myyntikanava  
Maatilamatkailukohteiden parempi näkyvyys lähikuntien ja koko Suomen  
matkailumarkkinoinnissa  
Tehokkaampi suuntautuminen kansainvälisille markkinoille  
Maatilamatkailutuotteiden laadun kontrollointi ja varmistaminen

### Tulosten hyödyllisyys

Vaikka löydetty menestystekijät olisivatkin ehkä olleet melko ennalta-arvattavia, tutkimuksen myötä esille nousi muitakin asioita. Maatila- ja maaseutumatkailun potentiaali osana Suomen matkailua tunnistettiin ja aihe on näin ollen nostettu esille. Tutkimuksen toivotaankin antavan maatilamatkailulle lisää näkyvyyttä ja mahdollisesti innostavan uusiin aiheeseen liittyviin tutkimuksiin ja toimiin.